



Conserving the Entrance to Samish Island

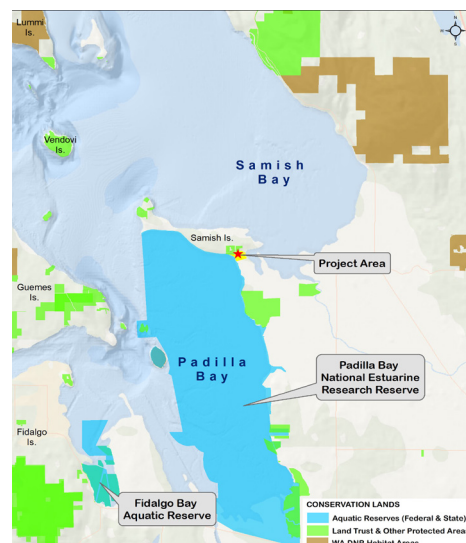
Skagit Land Trust has an immediate opportunity to purchase an approximately 50-acre property that serves as the entrance to Samish Island. This property is adjacent to the Trust's recently conserved Samish Flower Farm.

Skagit Land Trust (the Trust) is reaching out to the community and our members to raise at least \$275,000 by April 30th. These donations, together with Trust funds, a National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant, and an applied for state grant will be used to purchase the property in the next two months.

This is a unique property and rare opportunity. Just before you drive onto Samish Island, you pass over a narrow neck of land connecting the Island to the Samish Flats. With views of Padilla Bay to the west, and Samish Bay to the east, this land holds an important history for the people and wildlife of Skagit County. The thin ribbon of Siwash Slough, which historically snaked from one bay to the other, is a faint echo of the dynamic shoreline that used to exist here.

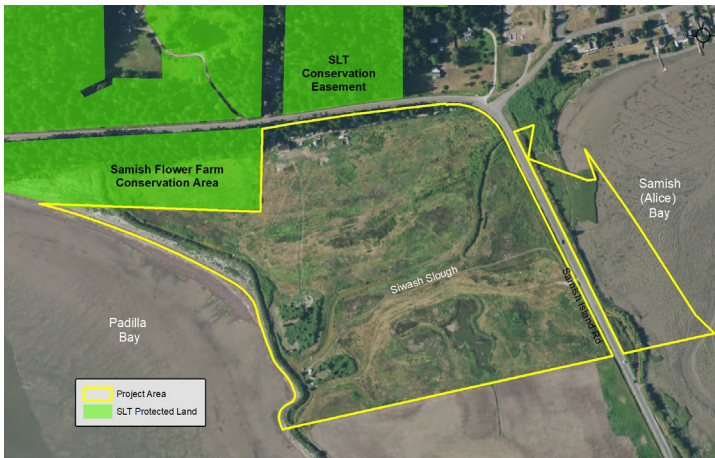
The Samish Island entrance property has been stewarded over the years by the Squires family, who have a long history on the Island. In 1995, James Squires Jr donated a conservation easement on 11 acres of his family's land which lies across the road from the property the Trust is currently working to purchase. His son added nearly three acres to this easement in 2004, honoring his father's wishes to protect the forest, scenic view, heronry, and wildlife these woods

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map of conserved lands around the property

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contained. The current owner, also a Squires family member, now wishes to sell his land to Skagit Land Trust and is pleased it will be protected forever. This newly conserved property connects directly to the Trust's Samish Flower Farm property and will extend shoreline protection and beach access on Padilla Bay.

If the Trust can purchase the property, near-term stewardship actions include clean-up of the land including removing structures, controlling invasive species, enhancing wildlife habitat, and providing low-impact public beach access.

The property will also be used as a Conservation Classroom site, allowing local youth to learn about the importance of marine shorelines, wetlands, and salt marshes. Students can also help with restoration and stewardship activities.

Our ownership of this land along with the adjacent Samish Flower Farm, will allow us to explore long-term restoration options with partners and the community. The lowlands of these properties were once an area of tidal wetlands and salt marsh. We plan to research possibilities of returning part of the land back to this valuable and increasingly rare type of ecosystem. Restoring salt marsh habitat would serve as a nursery for fish and marine wildlife, and would protect the adjacent lands from storms, while also trapping gases like carbon and nitrogen.



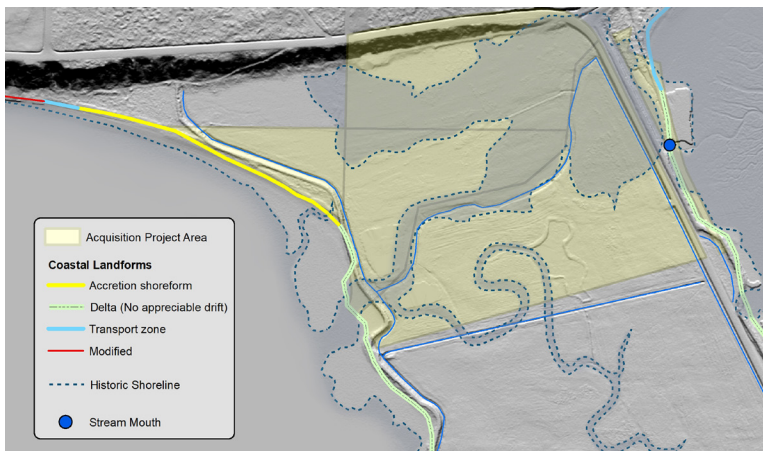
The shoreline along the Padilla Bay side of the property

The Samish Indian Nation has pledged the support of their Natural Resources Team and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer in these restoration efforts. The Coast Salish People inhabited the Skagit and San Juan Islands and surrounding territory for thousands of years before European contact. A large Samish village was situated at the east end of Samish Island. The Samish Indian Nation states that, "The area has tremendous cultural significance to the Tribe".

We are close to making the preservation of this historic and ecologically important place a reality, but we need your help. Your donation to the Samish Island Entrance Campaign will be matched dollar for dollar by a \$50,000 challenge match from a group of Trust members. Please join us in saving this special place for generations of people and wildlife. Visit skagitlandtrust.org to learn more about the project, sign up for our zoom community meeting on March 15th, and add your support.



From left to right: Stewardship Director Regina Wandler, Conservation Director Michael Kirshenbaum, and Board Member Roger Fuller, on a site visit; students from Fiddlehead Montessori planting trees at Samish Flower Farm; the property offers excellent birding opportunities. Future plans would include using the site as a Conservation Classroom to engage local youth in learning on the land.



Left to right: the historic shoreline shows how large and dynamic Siwash Slough and the area's salt marsh once was; the current limited path of Siwash Slough. Bottom: picture of the Siwash Slough meandering through the property.



Including the Whole Community in Local Science Research on the Land



Volunteer Land Steward Janet Cray leads an amphibian egg mass survey at Green Rd Marsh.

For many years Skagit Land Trust has connected volunteers with scientific projects that answer questions important to the Trust. Volunteers have undertaken work such as counting Great Blue Heron nests and surveying wetlands for amphibian egg masses. Throughout the world these types of projects are known as Citizen Science. However, as part of the Trust's commitment to engage a broader range of community members, and following the lead of other conservation organizations such as the Audubon Society, we will begin referring to this work under the more inclusive name of **Community Science**.

In recognition of this change, join us this Earth Day, April 22nd as we launch a new project through I-naturalist. Volunteers of all ages and abilities can participate. Using your own smart phone or camera and on your own schedule, help Skagit Land Trust document the many plants and animals found on our conservation areas. Take a walk along a trail you've never explored and collect observations, even of species you can't identify. Observations uploaded to I-naturalist contribute to a database used by scientists around the world. Download I-Naturalist today and check our website in April for next steps in this exciting new project.

Staff and volunteers after a day of Great Blue Heron nest counting at March Point. Note the tree full of nests in the background.

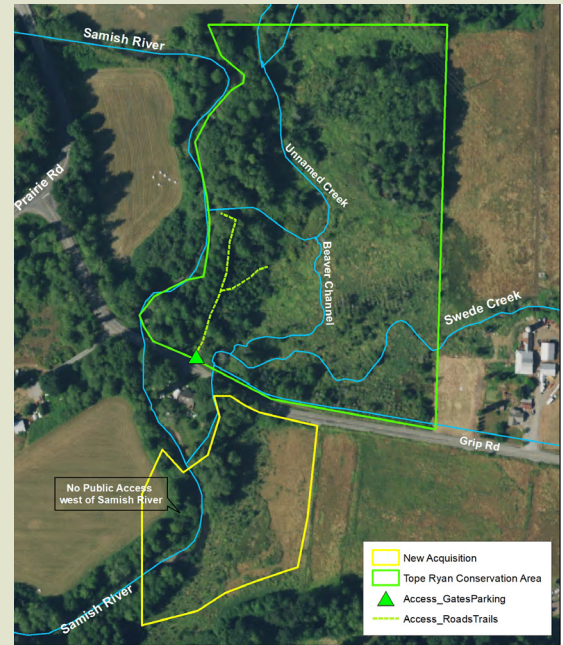


Tope Ryan Conservation Area Expanded & Over 5,000 Trees Planted

The Tope Ryan Conservation Area grew to almost 21 acres at the end of 2020, thanks to the generous donation of 4.5 acres by Cougar Peak, LLC. This donation protects an additional 900 feet of Samish River and Swede Creek shoreline. The property is located within FEMA's 100-year floodplain.

Swede Creek joins with the Samish River at the new addition. This stretch of water is of particular importance for juvenile salmon due to the habitat complexity at the site. The river features wide gravel bars and critical spawning grounds for Coho and Chum Salmon as well as Steelhead and Cutthroat Trout.

Beavers have drastically re-engineered the landscape since the original property was donated to Skagit Land Trust in 1996 by peace activist Tope Ryan. They have created dams, ponds, and new channels. Their activity has greatly improved the site from a conservation perspective, though it can throw off the most carefully laid planting plans!



This channel connects a side channel of the Samish River with Swede Creek and has been entirely excavated by beavers since the Trust acquired the property.

This winter Trust staff and volunteers kept busy planting 5,370 native trees and shrubs on 12 acres of the conservation area. Willows line the channels, which have a better chance of growing back even if beaver gnaw them down.

Partner agencies and organizations were instrumental in funding this acquisition and restoration. The National Estuary Program, administered by Washington State Department of Ecology, paid for costs that helped facilitate the land acquisition. The program also assisted with extensive site preparation and planting. The project was funded in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement SEANEP-2015-SkagLT-00011.

The Skagit Conservation District prepared restoration plans for the site and helped secure federal (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program funds for planting and maintenance into the future. Maintenance is vital on a site like this where small plants will compete with dense reed canary grass until they grow tall enough to shade the grass out.

If you'd like an adventure, we invite you to visit this site over the summer. You are almost guaranteed to see eagles perched in the trees along Swede Creek or the Samish River. Just remember to watch your step and look out for beaver channels hidden in the grass!



Our hardy volunteers came out, masks on, ready to plant in November and February! Thanks to all the volunteers who helped us plant. We couldn't have done it without you! Mark Hitchcock, Tim Manns, Anita Gras Bryant, Thomas Kress, David Baer, Sarah Zabel, Gary Wickman, King Dahl, Paul Johnson, Sylvi Thorstenson, Richard Mellon, Ryan Cook, Jake West, Katie Bunge, Brady Irwin, Ian McKellips, Mike Oras, Dan Allison, Merilee Harrell, Hal Lee, Jaye Stover, John Day, Kathy Thornburgh, Carol Taylor, Richard Revoyr, Sharon Howard, Deborah North, Paul Vance, Tom Slocum, Kurt Buchanan, Janice Buchanan and students from the Anacortes National Honor Society: Anabella Isaacson, Katie Kamp, Katie Flint, Emme Mavar, Kayla Strandberg, Campbell Plageman, Lee Rudge, Thomas Harris and Reese Illston.

Connecting During Covid - Thank You for Staying Engaged with the Trust!

The way we have connected over the past year has changed a lot. All of us here at the Trust want to say how grateful we are for our members. From members who continued to donate during this difficult time, to supporters who joined us for the first time, from socially distanced work parties, to creating take-home wreath making kits for local youth, and SLT Reads online book club, this community has continued to focus on saving and caring for natural lands that generations of people and wildlife will enjoy. Thank you! Here are just a few pictures from the past year.



Left to right: Land Stewards and Aides installing the new Utopia sign; assembling wreath-making kits for youth that would normally be visiting Trust properties; Conservation Project Manager Kari Odden and member Chris Farrow; Development Director Laura Hartner and volunteers during the online auction; trail work at Samish Flower Farm; Land Stewards and Aides installing the new Hurn Field sign; Jane Zillig's retirement party; the land committee at Barney Lake; a peek into our monthly online board meeting.

Save the Date! Annual Membership Meeting Wednesday, March 24th 6-7:30pm



- Overview on Trust projects in 2020
- Updates on upcoming projects
- Community Awards
- Election of board members
- Conversation with North Cascades Institute Executive Director Saul Weisberg on his lifetime of work related to conservation in the Skagit

Open to Members, Landowners, Project Partners, Volunteers, and Community Members.

RSVP at www.skagitlandtrust.org. The meeting will be held on zoom, and meeting information will be emailed to all RSVP'd guests before the meeting.

Gifts of Stock Provide Benefits for Local Conservation and the Donor

Have you had stock that has increased in value since you acquired it? Donating appreciated stock, mutual funds, or appreciated publicly held securities is a tax-savvy way to support local land conservation and Skagit Land Trust. If you were to cash out your stock and then make a gift, you may realize a taxable profit and incur capital gains taxes. However, if you transfer stock directly to the Trust, you can avoid paying this tax. You may also be able to deduct the full amount of your stock as a charitable donation on your tax return. Donating stocks, bonds, mutual funds, or other appreciated publicly held securities can be an easy way to support the Trust. Many of our members choose to take advantage of this smart way to give. For more information, email Development Director Laura Hartner, laurah@skagitlandtrust.org and talk with your financial advisor.

Samish Island Caretakers: Members Ted and Doris Rempel



Skagit Land Trust members have many ways of supporting conservation efforts here in the Skagit, including volunteering at stewardship work parties and making gifts to the Trust. For many, membership in this larger conservation community reflects the work they are doing on their own land. This is true for Trust members Ted and Doris Rempel. For 30 years the couple has worked to restore a healthy forest on their Samish Island home.

In 1990, the Rempels rented a place on Blue Heron Road for a month. They recount that “the quiet of the Island, the view across Samish Bay to Lummi Island, the forest covered mountains that fringed the rich agricultural land of the valley, and snow-capped Mount Baker, this was indeed a bit of paradise”. Ted and Doris decided to leave the city, and when they moved to Samish Island, Ted flew over it with a friend and took some photos. He compared those pictures to a 1964 aerial photo of Samish Island. The deforestation that had occurred in that brief time was quite evident and it troubled the Rempels.

They purchased seven acres that included a modest house, outbuildings, an orchard, pasture, and two-and-a-half-acres of forest. Highland cattle living on the property had damaged the fir, cedar, hemlock and understory in the forest and hindered new growth. With the assistance of Skagit Conservation District and Island neighbor (and Trust member) Terry Wiggin, Ted and Doris set about restoring and expanding their “little” forest.

“With the help of our four sons and their families, in three decades we have planted about 1,500 trees and bushes. We added more Douglas fir, maple, red cedar, birch, various pines, plus plants like huckleberry, willow, dogwood, and hawthorn. Our intention was to provide a healthier habitat for wildlife, to beautify the landscape, and to expand the “carbon sink”: a kind of carbon exchange.”



Photo from Ted's 1993 fly over.

The Rempels also thought about the future in protecting their beautiful property. Ted and Doris placed a covenant in their deed so the forest may not be harvested and is maintained in good health. Knowing how important trees are to the environment, the Rempels were pleased to support the Trust's efforts to save Samish Flower Farm and the forest and shoreline that maintain a natural approach to Samish Island.

“We became members of Skagit Land Trust because we wanted to help preserve the forests, wetlands and natural habitat for future generations,” says Doris. “Our fragile world depends on the dedication of concerned citizens to help save our natural wonders.”

Many thanks to Ted and Doris, and all our members who steward the land in their own backyard and beyond!

Building a Trail Leads to New Ways to Volunteer



Ian Woofenden (left) leading a crew of volunteers in trail maintenance.

Volunteers start their journey with Skagit Land Trust in many different ways. For Ian Woofenden, it was the trail on Guemes Mountain that got him hooked on volunteering with the Trust. After helping Skagit Land Trust and the Washington Trails Association build the Guemes Mountain trail in 2010, Ian became a Trust Land Steward for Guemes Mountain. His volunteer stewardship work has expanded as the Trust's Guemes Island presence has grown to encompass Guemes Mountain and Valley and Kelly's Point. He is a man who loves it all- whether helping conservation work with Skagit Land Trust, the San Juan Preservation Trust or landowners who have conserved their property.

Ian's knowledge of Guemes Island and desire to get things done in a creative and sustainable way, is a tremendous help to the Trust. As an example, along with a group of other volunteers, Ian helped install two benches and an entrance sign at our Kelly's Point Conservation Area. Ian was even able to source a piece of Smuggler Kelly's boat for the back of the sign. If you see mysterious "fixes" on our Guemes Island properties, I know you may surmise as we do, "Ian was here".

In addition to his stewardship work on Guemes Island, Ian's renewable energy expertise has been a huge asset to our March Point Conservation Area heron camera project. He helped the Trust plan a new solar array to power additional heron cameras due to go online in the Fall of 2021. Ian's experience in this field stems from a 20-year career as writer and editor at Home Power magazine and his 20-year career teaching, consulting and organizing workshops on renewable energy on Guemes Island, Costa Rica, and throughout the United States. He has lived off-grid on Guemes Island for over 40 years.

Trails are important to Ian. He appreciates how they give people access to forests, the outdoors, and an opportunity to have connection with the peace, quiet, and beauty of nature. He has built a network of trails in his neighborhood and recently helped Trust staff lay out the new upland trail at the Samish Flower Farm Conservation Area.

When not helping Skagit Land Trust or other organizations, Ian works on his homestead - complete with zipline, rope swing, and waterslide! He loves spending time with his partner Lisa and their combined 11 children and grandchildren. Ian and Lisa often play music together for fun and for small events, including at the 2018 Trust Picnic.

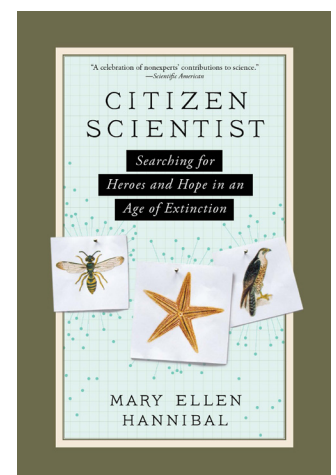


Ian playing at the 2018 Trust Picnic on Guemes Island

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with the Trust, there are lots of ways you can help conservation efforts here in the Skagit. Please email Volunteer Coordinator Stacy Dahl, stacyd@skagitlandtrust.org.

Spring into the Season with a Good Book and the Trust

The fun has continued in our SLT Reads book club over the last few months. Author Adrienne Ross Scanlan joined us to discuss her book *Turning Homeward: Restoring Hope and Nature in the Urban Wild* and filled us in on her personal goal of planting 1000 trees in the Puget Sound region. In January we talked about the interesting characters and themes of Richard Powers' novel, *The Overstory*. Our next book is *The Sun is a Compass* by Caroline Van Hemert. If you've already read it, please feel free to join us on March 11th. Or, if you'd like a little more time, pick up a copy of *Citizen Scientist: Searching for Heroes and Hope in an Age of Extinction* by Mary Ellen Hannibal, which we will be talking about on April 15, 2021 5:30-7:00. Rsvp for all SLT Reads events at skagitlandtrust.org. Hope to see you there!



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New Skagit Land Trust Apparel!

Have you been looking for your favorite new T-shirt or cozy hoodie? Do you also want to show off your love for local land conservation and Skagit Land Trust? You're in luck! We're doing an order of custom Trust apparel this March. Visit our website to reserve your T-shirt or hoodie. Sizes from adult XS-3XL are available.

Orders must be placed by 3/21/21. Apparel will be available at the end of April.

Green Hoodies Unisex - \$40

Charcoal Black Womens Relaxed Tee - \$28

Charcoal Black Unisex T-Shirt - \$28

Each item features the Great Blue Heron on the front, and Trust logo on the back.

